

Washington, DC-Congressman Teague released the following statement in advance of the Health Care vote on Sunday.

“Living without health insurance coverage is something that I have experienced in my own life. Like so many New Mexico families, both my parents worked to make ends meet, but they still could not afford health insurance for our family. When I was 17 years old, tragedy struck our home when both my parents got sick at the same time. I had no choice but to drop out of school and go to work to help support our family.

I had hoped to have a chance to vote on a bill that provided affordable health care options to all American families, but after reviewing the final health care reform proposal, I do not believe that the bill does enough to contain costs and it definitely does not do enough to rein in the out of control insurance companies that are driving up healthcare costs in this country. In fact, I believe we are doing more for the insurance companies than we are for the people who need this coverage, and that is why, despite the positive steps it takes, I must vote against this bill.

There are some pieces of the final health care reform proposal that I agree with, like ending the despicable practice of insurance companies canceling or denying coverage to people because of pre-existing conditions and it closes the Medicare Part D donut hole, guaranteeing lower drug costs for seniors. These are much needed changes that I support, but they aren't enough to rein in insurance companies and make health care truly affordable.

I have hosted 100 public meetings in southern New Mexico and health care reform was almost always a topic of conversation. People had strong opinions on both sides, but for the most part, we agreed that our health care system is broken and needs reforming. It is overly bureaucratic, it costs way too much, it covers too few, and it undermines our nation's economic strength. Health care spending has spiraled out of control, piling costs on businesses, local governments, families and individuals.

The only way to fix that is to focus on lowering the cost of care. This bill mandates that every individual buy health insurance, but it does little to address the cost of health care, which is why many New Mexicans are uninsured in the first place. It tells businesses to do the right thing and provide insurance for employees, but doesn't guarantee or require affordable options.

There is no doubt that we need to do more to improve health care in this country and that is why in my short time in Congress, I have supported expanding SCHIP. I voted to provide funding to community health centers and to protect seniors' access to care through Medicare. I have fought to improve healthcare for our veterans. And, I cosponsored the bill to eliminate the anti-trust exemptions that allow the health insurance industry to work behind closed doors to fix prices without fear of investigation or oversight.

Moving forward, I will continue to fight for a health care system that puts patients before profits and that brings health care costs under control so people don't have to choose between paying the rent and a doctor's appointment."

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